

Luton Town 1 Ipswich Town 0
@Kenilworth Road, Saturday, April 1, 2006

Man of the Match

Shane Supple
TECHNICALLY there is nothing this boy can't do. Taking high balls under pressure, and leaving his challenger flattened, brave blocks, acrobatic two-handed catches, or tip-over saves – Supple does the lot.



The 18-year-old Irishman may look to control his distribution a little better but that's just being pedantic. Supple probably would not want to be as busy as he was at Luton, but has shown that when asked he delivers, and there is no doubt he will go on to be a full Republic of Ireland international. He could not have done a lot about the goal as his defence went AWOL, although for the most part Fabian Wilnis was outstanding and was his nearest challenger for this accolade.

The Championship

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Reading (C)	41	28	11	2	87	26	95
Sheff Utd	41	23	10	8	69	42	79
Watford	41	20	12	9	71	49	72
Leeds	41	20	12	9	54	34	72
Crystal P.	41	20	10	11	63	42	70
Preston	41	16	19	6	50	28	67
Wolves	41	14	17	10	44	36	59
Cardiff	41	16	11	14	54	48	59
Norwich	41	16	8	17	51	58	56
Luton	41	16	7	18	60	61	55
Ipswich	41	13	14	14	47	56	53
Coventry	41	13	13	15	53	60	52
Stoke	41	15	7	19	43	55	52
Plymouth	41	12	15	14	35	41	51
QPR	41	12	13	16	45	56	49
Hull	41	12	12	17	45	50	48
Burnley	41	13	9	19	44	52	48
Leicester	41	11	14	16	46	54	47
Southampton	41	9	19	13	40	47	46
Derby	41	9	18	14	50	61	45
Sheff Wed	41	10	12	19	33	49	42
Millwall	41	7	15	19	31	54	36
Brighton	41	6	17	18	36	60	35
Crewe	41	7	13	21	48	80	34

FOOTBALL Luton Town v Ipswich Town

Hatters get

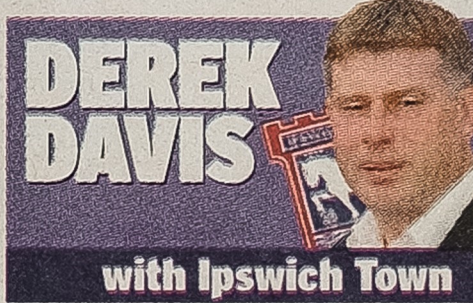
Blues fail to hit their stride and suffer defeat to late goal

05/06



SCORING CHANCE: Alan Lee (right) goes close with this effort in Ipswich Town's 1-0 defeat at Luton on Saturday

Photographs: WARREN PAGE



DEREK DAVIS
with Ipswich Town

THERE can be no disguising that this was a dismal encounter between two teams with nothing of real consequence to play for.

For all the talk of still being in with a mathematical chance of reaching the play-offs this performance did not match that ambition. And the result means the Blues have to win every remaining game and hope Preston don't pick up two points from five games, never mind what the other chasers do.

While the decision by referee Lee Mason not to actually give a penalty after Jimmy Juan was knocked over in the area as he was about to shoot, when it appeared he was already pointing to the spot, did not help Ipswich, there is little point in blaming the officials yet again.

He may have been the same man who sent off Sito Castro against Norwich earlier in the season, then changed his mind on that one as well, but that doesn't make him a bad official – just prone to mistakes that hurt Ipswich.

Chances are Ipswich would have been a goal up going in at half time, but the way they were playing there is an equally good chance that Luton would have scored anyway.

Nor can the poor pitch be used an excuse, although it did



WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT SO FAR? England cricketer and Luton fan Monty Panesar (left) is interviewed at Kenilworth Road

resemble a poorly-kept allotment and you can understand why the Hatters' fans are so keen to move. It was as bad for both sides and Luton adapted better by bypassing midfield,

and the deck for the most part. No, quite simply too many players had an off day, and one or two just weren't up to the task, although their effort should not be questioned.

Marlon Beresford

Kevin Foley Russell Perrett Chris Coyne Sol Davis

Carlos Edwards Markus Hekkinen Steve Robinson Dean Morgan

Rowan Vine Steve Howard

Richard Naylor Alan Lee

Matt Richards Jimmy Juan Owen Garvan Darren Currie

Jay McEveley Jason De Vos Fabian Wilnis Sito Castro

Shane Supple

IPSWICH TOWN 4-4-2

Goals: None. Bookings: None

- 31 Shane Supple Man of the match 8
- 15 Sito Castro Costly mistakes as he allowed in too many crosses 5
- 2 Fabian Wilnis Dived around, putting body bravely in the way like a man half his age 7
- 4 Jason De Vos Caught in No-Man's Land for Luton goal 6
- 5 Jay McEveley Did well in circumstances but given tough baptism by Edwards on return 6
- 3 Matt Richards An early knock clearly affected him and he could not get into his stride 5
- 23 Owen Garvan Lacked his usual bite, as he was not allowed room to manoeuvre 5
- 19 Jimmy Juan Lacked sharpness although should have had a penalty 5
- 10 Darren Currie Clever couple of early touches but below usual high standard 5
- 6 Richard Naylor Added physical presence up front but never looked like scoring 5
- 32 Alan Lee Kept ball but lacked usual sharpness and goal threat 5

SUBS: 18 Dean Bowditch (for Richards, 54) 6, 29 Danny Haynes (for Castro, 85) 6, 16 Chris Casement, 27 Vemund Brekke Skard, 34 Lewis Price

LUTON TOWN 4-4-2

Goals: Howard, 81. Bookings: Howard (dissent, 65); Davis (foul, 68); Foley (foul, 72); Brkovic (foul, 82)

- 1 Marlon Beresford Vital early tip over save but little else to worry about 6
- 2 Kevin Foley Sturdy defender who liked to overlap 6
- 5 Russell Perrett Unsure at times but never overly concerned 6
- 4 Chris Coyne Handled physical Town presence comfortably enough 7
- 3 Sol Davis Solid defending and got forward well 6
- 7 Carlos Edwards Always looking to attack players and get crosses in 7
- 26 Markus Hekkinen Good marking job but lucky not to concede penalty 6
- 11 Steve Robinson Stuck to task in helping to keep Garvan quiet 6
- 23 Dean Morgan Allowed too much space but could not deliver 5
- 9 Rowan Vine Missed too many decent chances and denied by Supple 5
- 19 Steve Howard Good finish in the end after being frustrated by keeper 7

SUBS: 10 Warren Feeney (for Vine, 75) 6, 18 Ahmet Brkovic (for Morgan, 75) 7, 16 Enoch Showunmi (for Hekkinen, 77) 6, 28 David Bell, 33 Dean Brill

Referee: Lee Mason (Lancs) 5 Attendance: 9,820
Pitch: Cabbage patch Weather: Dry and sunny

DEREK DAVIS' TOWN RATINGS ARE SPONSORED BY



TOWN	LUTON
3 SHOTS ON TARGET	6
8 SHOTS OFF TARGET	4
6 CORNERS	8
8 OFFSIDES	3
15 FOULS CONCEDED	15
0 HIT WOODWORK	0

the better of a bad day



DECISIVE MOMENT: Ipswich Town goalkeeper Shane Supple dives but cannot stop Steve Howard's winning goal for Luton at Kenilworth Road on Saturday

Photographs: WARREN PAGE

Shane Supple apart, and he was only given the chance to shine as much as he did because others failed in their jobs, none of the Blues players did themselves justice.

Fabian Wilnis was almost heroic in his defending and was a possible exception but for the others nothing really came off for them.

Sito Castro has shown he can produce some great tackles, good passes and offers support in attack, but his propensity for errors has become alarming and there is a fair chance we won't be seeing much of the Spaniard in the starting line-up for the rest of the season.

It was from Sito's side that substitute Ahmet Brkovic was able to cross for an unmarked Steve Howard to head past the hapless Supple with nine minutes remaining.

It was Howard's 15th goal of the season and highlighted what Town have been missing for most of the season, a fit striker capable of finishing.

With Alan Lee not 100% after struggling all week with a groin problem, compounded by his shortage of match fitness brought about by a hamstringing tear, the Blues opted to support him by playing Richard Naylor up front alongside him.

With Wilnis and Jason De Vos comfortable as a centre-back partnership, it was not vital that Naylor should

return from his two-match ban in defence.

But it never really worked. Although the cub's longest-serving player added a lot of strength to the attack he never really threatened goal – not that he was given much service, and it is doubtful whether alternatives Dean Bowditch or Danny Haynes would have fared much better.

'Ipswich had more of the ball but could not utilise it'

The chances are though that it is unlikely that Naylor will be used as a makeshift forward again this season because if the Blues are to plan for the future they may feel the need to give the youngsters their head and to hell with the consequences if it goes badly wrong.

Alternatively it could be a spectacular success and one or the other would test keepers more than Marlon Beresford was.

His only real concern came when Darren Currie let rip from almost 30 yards and the veteran keeper, who is twice Supple's age, tipped over the bar.

Beresford's only other moment of concern was when Lee burst clear but

his shot was timid and easily taken.

Supple, on the other hand, had to save at the feet of Kevin Foley, deny former Colchester United striker Dean Morgan with a fine upright block and pulled off an acrobatic two-handed pluck when Howard tried to curl one in from 20 yards.

Although Luton had the better and more clear-cut chances, Ipswich probably had more of the ball but could not utilise it.

Their midfield, which looked theoretically as good as it can get for Town, was strangely ineffective.

Currie had a few moments of cheeky cleverness early on but disappeared after his drive was saved.

Matt Richards took a couple of hefty whacks early on and looked like he was going to call it a day when he went down unchallenged, but with Bowditch stripped off ready Richards resumed. He may well wish he had not bothered because he was nowhere near his best and could not get into the game the same way he usually does.

Owen Garvan was also anonymous with the Luton midfield sitting tight on him.

The Town playmaker is going to have to get used to this sort of tight screening as his reputation grows and learn to find ways of getting clear, or using the tight marking to the team's advantage.

Although Juan almost won a penalty,



BACK IN ACTION: Jay McEveley on the ball for Ipswich against Luton

he was below par and it looked like the lack of recent games had blunted his sharpness too.

Bad days like this one happen occasionally, and it has to be said Luton were not a whole lot more inspiring, and it is difficult to get overly excited by the remaining fixtures, but the Ipswich manager Joe Royle now has the chance to experiment a little more adventurously. Those players in comfort zones may find willing back-ups getting a longer run-out and this in turn may inject a little more enthusiasm, vim

and inventiveness to the side.

The upcoming home games against Stoke City and Brighton may not mean much in terms of points now, although Albion are scrapping for their Championship lives, but a good, entertaining display could go a long way in convincing a few waverers to buy their season's tickets and invest in next season's title chase.

And, of course, Town will want to finish higher than Norwich.

derek.davis@archant.co.uk